NEWS ANALYSIS 1-1902 NOVEMBER 27, 1976
FRED GALVAN

RHODESIA TALKS BREAKTHROUGH

ANNCR: THERE'S BEEN A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE HITHERTO-DEADLOCKED GENEVA TALKS ON RHODESIAN INDEPENDENCE. NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN DISCUSSES THIS DEVELOPMENT.

VOICE: WHEN LEADERS OF FOUR BLACK NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS MET WITH DELEGATES OF RHODESIA'S BREAK-AWAY REGIME IN GENEVA AT THE URGING OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES SOME FOUR WEEKS AGO, NO ONE EXPECTED THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE EASY. THE CONFERENCE ON RHODESIA'S POLITICAL FUTURE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY BOGGED DOWN OVER A KEY BRITISH PROPOSAL. THAT WAS THAT RHODESIA ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE WITHIN TWO YEARS. THE BLACK RHODESIAN DELEGATIONS AND THEIR SO-CALLED FRONT-LINE AFRICAN GOVERNMENT BACKERS SAID THAT WAS TOO DISTANT A DATE-- THAT THEY WANTED INDEPENDENCE UNDER A BLACK MAJORITY GOVERNMENT IN RHODESIA WITHIN A YEAR. THE BRITISH CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE-SIR IVOR RICHARD-- SAID THAT WAS TOO SOON IN VIEW OF THE PREPARATIONS NEEDED TO ORGANIZE ELECTIONS FOR A BI-RACIAL GOVERNMENT.

HOWEVER, WITH WASHINGTON'S SUPPORT, LONDON ADOPTED A FLEXIBLE STANCE THROUGHOUT THE INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS THAT FOLLOWED BETWEEN ITS CHAIRMAN AND THE FOUR BLACK RHODESIAN NATIONALIST LEADERS.

LESS THAN TWO WEEKS AGO, BRITAIN PROPOSED A NEW TIME-TABLE FOR RHODESIA'S INDEPENDENCE-- FIFTEEN MONTHS FROM NOW, ON MARCH FIRST, 1978. MOREOVER, IT SUGGESTED THAT IF PREPARATIONS COULD BE COMPLETED BEFORE THAT DATE, INDEPENDENCE BE MOVED UP TO DECEMBER FIRST OF NEXT YEAR. TWO OF THE BLACK NATIONALIST FACTIONS ACCEPTED THAT FORMULA, BUT TWO DID NOT -- UNTIL YESTERDAY (FRIDAY.) THUS THE DEADLOCK SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN BROKEN.

WHAT THIS MEANS, OF COURSE, IS THAT THE CONFERENCE CAN NOW SETTLE DOWN TO ITS MAIN JOB-- THE CREATION OF A BI-RACIAL RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT ON AN INTERIM BASIS TO PREPARE ELECTIONS FOR A PERMANENT GOVERNMENT. THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT'S TASK WILL BE TO DRAW UP A CONSTITUTION GUARANTEEING MAJORITY RULE FOR RHODESIA'S BLACKS WHILE PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF ITS WHITE MINORITY. IN ADDITION THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO SET UP CONSTITUENCIES AND PREPARE ELECTORAL ROLLS FOR THE VOTING THAT WILL CREATE RHODESIA'S FIRST INDEPENDENT, PERMANENT GOVERNMENT.

IN SALISBURY, PRIME MINISTER IAN SMITH'S GOVERNMENT EMPHASIZED THAT THE CREATION OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS THE HEART OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA. SALISBURY SAID IT THEREFORE DOES NOT SEE THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE BLACK NATIONALISTS OF THE BRITISH TIME-TABLE AS A BREAK-THROUGH. BUT THIS EMPHASIS BY SALISBURY ON THE NEXT PHASE OF THE CONFERENCE IN ITSELF INDICATES THAT THE SMITH REGIME, AT LEAST TACITLY, HAS ACCEPTED THE BRITISH TIMETABLE.

AND THAT, TO UNDERSTATE IT, IS ENCOURAGING EVEN IF, AS SIR IVOR RICHARD SAID SOME DAYS AGO, " THERE ARE VERY HARD ISSUES TO GET OVER (OVERCOME). THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE IS ONLY THE FIRST."

-0-